

in African-American homes across the country."

The Rev. White became president of the local Council of Civic Action, brought Operation Bread-basket to Fort Wayne and was president of the local chapter of Jackson's Operation P.U.S.H.

His first wife died in 1993, and he married Vanessa Atkins in 1995.

Funderal services will be 10 a.m. Saturday at True Love Baptist Church, 715 E. Wallace St. Calling will be 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday at Calvary Temple Worship Center, 1400 W. Washington Center Road.

A memorial service will be 5 to 8 p.m. Friday. He will be buried in Lindenwood Cemetery.

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REV. JESSE WHITE REMEMBERED AS "DRUM MAJOR FOR JUSTICE"

(By Kevin Kilbane)

The Rev. Michael Latham remembers the phone calls.

When Latham first became a pastor 12 years ago, the Rev. Jesse White would call once a week to see how the younger man was doing.

At least once a month, White would call on Sunday morning to encourage Latham before the young man went off to lead Renaissance Missionary Baptist Church in worship. White, the pastor of True Love Baptist Church, always ended the conversation with the words, "Preach good."

"He was my mentor," Latham said of White, 73, who died Monday after a short illness.

During nearly 50 years of ministry in Fort Wayne, friends and White showed the same

concern for other young pastors, people in need and those facing racial discrimination.

"I guess you could call him a drum major for justice," said Hana Stith, chairwoman of the African/African-American Historical Museum. "He really was."

The funeral service for White will be 10 a.m. Saturday at True Love Baptist, 715 E. Wallace St. Calling will be 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday at Calvary Temple Worship Center, 1400 W. Washington Center Road. A memorial service will follow from 5 to 8 p.m.

White, who moved to Fort Wayne in the early 1950s, first made an impact locally during the civil rights struggle of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

As president of the Civic Action Committee, he led other local African-American pastors in opening restaurants that had refused to serve minorities, recalled the Rev. James Bledsoe of St. John Missionary Baptist Church.

The committee intervened when companies refused to hire minorities or to treat them fairly, said Bledsoe, president of the local African-American pastors' Inter-denominational Ministerial Alliance.

In addition, White and the committee led protests against racial segregation in the Fort Wayne Community Schools district.

In fall 1969, for example, the pastors organized a boycott that kept 1,300 children out of schools. Children attended "freedom schools" in the churches for nine days before FWCS agreed to provide the students with equal educational resources.

"He didn't fear any retribution," Stith said. "He just stepped up and did what was right."

White also touched many lives through his dynamic preaching and as a mentor, clergy said.

First as pastor of Progressive Baptist Church from 1955 to 1974, and then as leader of True Love Baptist, which he founded in 1974, White was a frequent guest speaker at local pulpits.

"If anybody would call Dr. White to come and speak, he would never say no," Latham said.

White's preaching ability also frequently set up and preached at out-of-town crusades as part of his duties as chairman of the National Baptist Convention's evangelistic board, Bledsoe said.

"I do a lot of traveling," Bledsoe said, "and when I say I'm from Fort Wayne, they say, 'Oh, you are from Jesse White's town.'"

But despite a busy schedule, White was always willing to help with a community or personal need, said the Rev. Vernon Graham, executive pastor of Associated Churches of Fort Wayne and Allen County.

"He was like the tall oak tree," Graham said. "He was one of the pastors the younger pastors would turn to for advice and counseling."

Graham also frequently asked White's help in planning or carrying out Associated churches' projects. Those efforts have included establishing food banks and other programs to help the needy, and initiatives to heal racial division.

Through White's work, Latham and other pastors noted, present generations enjoy the freedom and opportunities they have now.

"Dr. White was one of the ones who paved the way," Latham said "I think what we are doing today is standing on his shoulders."